



Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Strategic Plan 2017 - 2019

Waukesha County's departmental Strategic Plans guide the work of the organization toward achievement of its overall goals.



"The Waukesha County Office of Corporation Counsel strives to provide efficient and effective legal services to our internal and external clients in order to satisfy their legal needs, guide effective policy and protect the County's most vulnerable citizens."

– Erik G. Weidig, Corporation Counsel

Acknowledgements

For their contributions to this document, we recognize and thank the following:

Maureen Atwell – Principal Assistant Corp. Counsel/Child Support Director
Deborah B. Price – Principal Assistant Corp. Counsel
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Marlene Mikesell – Office Services Coordinator, Corporation Counsel
Nicole Armendariz – Public Information Officer
Shawn Lundie – Chief of Staff
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Reader's Guide: How to read the Strategic Plan

Thanks for reading Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Strategic Plan.

This document provides an overview of what Waukesha County leadership aims to achieve over the next three years and how this Department aims to meet those goals.

Note: Consider this Strategic Plan a high-level look at problem-solving initiatives. As such, a reader may not encounter data on all departmental activities (as found in an Operational Plan). We welcome your questions and feedback any time!

What's an Objective?

In this Strategic Plan, an Objective is a milestone to be reached. It must be **specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound** (aka **SMART**).

Each objective appears in two places: In a list that shows all of our goals in one place, and on its own page (example below, right).

Owner: The member of our team that is accountable for this Objective.

Feel free to contact Waukesha County to discuss any objective – just ask for the person listed here. We do the very same!

Strategy: What must be accomplished in order to achieve our objective.

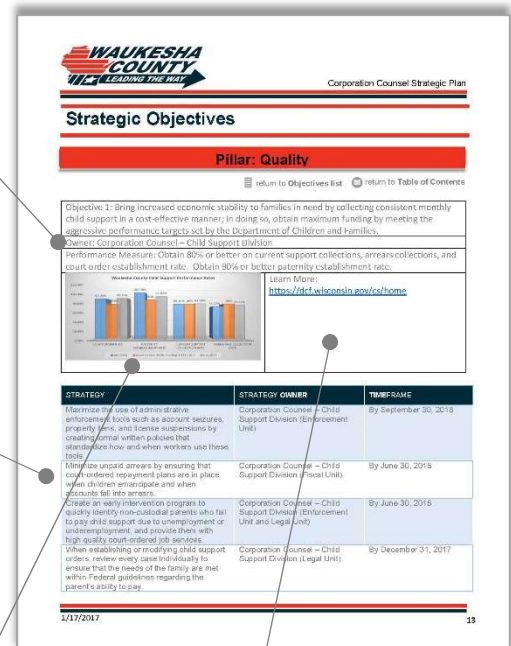
A company that sells fruit snacks may set an objective to "increase sales." One of their strategies is to pioneer new points of sale beyond supermarkets and vending machines, like commercial air travel, pizza delivery, and pro sporting events.

Like each Objective, a Strategy has an **owner** who guides efforts for its completion and success. Find this in the center column.

In the right-hand column, please find the **timeframe** for each strategy. This represents each strategy's deadline.

Performance measures:

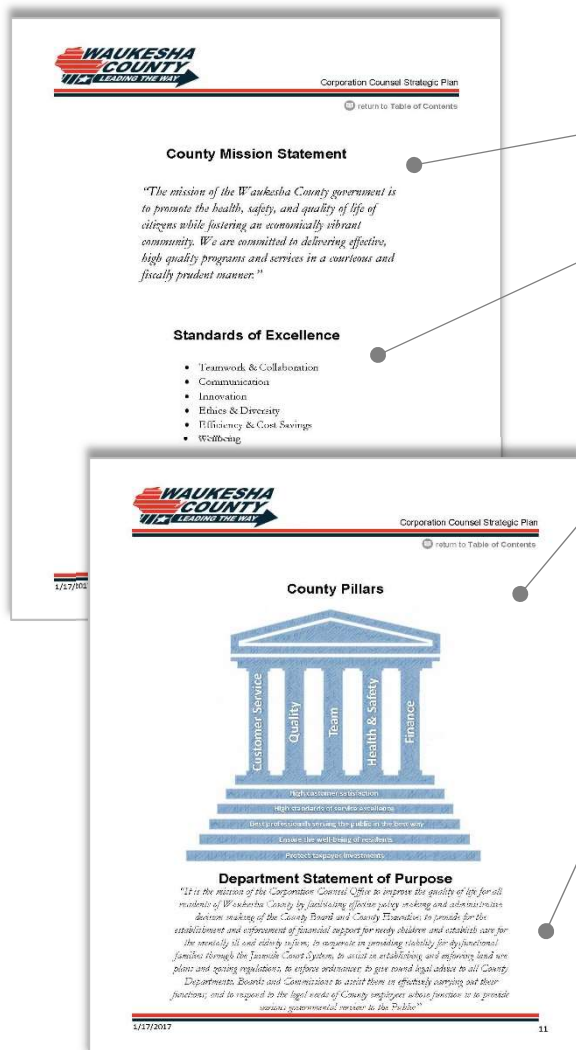
A graphic or image show the progress and status of each Objective's success.



Learn More:

Jump to supporting resources found in this Strategic Plan's appendices, on WaukeshaCounty.gov, or elsewhere!

How to read the Strategic Plan continued



The origin of each Objective

In each of Waukesha County's Departmental Strategic Plans, a pair of pages bears the principles and promises that guide our Objectives:

- Waukesha County's **Mission Statement**. The big picture.
- Waukesha County **Standards of Excellence**, the principles we observe on our path to completing our mission.
- Waukesha County's **Five Pillars of Success**, our framework for identifying core priorities and establishing program goals.
- Department's **Statement of Purpose**. Each department completes a Strategic Plan. Each declares its own "mission" here.

How is the objective shaped by the "environmental scan"?

Environmental scan (n): Monitoring of an organization's internal and external environments for detecting early signs of opportunities and threats that may influence its current and future plans.

Find environmental scan data summarized in this document's **Executive Summary** and **Appendix** sections.

Appendices at a glance

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[Appendix A – Customer Feedback Form Regarding the Ordinance Process](#)

[Appendix B - Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase I Report](#)

[Appendix C – Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase 3 Report](#)

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Transmittal Letter

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August 1, 2017

Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow
Waukesha County Board
Waukesha County residents and visitors

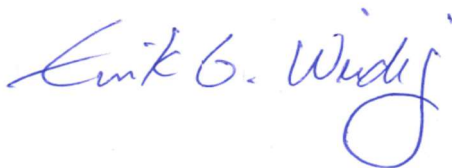
It is my pleasure to present to you the Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Strategic Plan 2017-2019. This plan represents a significant update from this office's prior Strategic Plan 2014-2016.

The Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Strategic Plan 2017-2019 incorporates the County's new 5 Pillars of Success to specifically shape our Strategic Objectives over the next three years. We will pursue these Strategic Objectives relying upon the County's Standards of Excellence as our guide: Teamwork & Collaboration; Communication; Innovation; Ethics & Diversity; Efficiency & Cost Savings; and Wellbeing.

It is my sincere belief that this plan sets the path for the Office of Corporation Counsel to best satisfy its mission to improve the quality of life for all residents of Waukesha County by facilitating effective policymaking and administrative decisions, establishing financial support for needy children, providing stability for dysfunctional families, giving sound legal advice to all County departments and boards, and otherwise meeting the legal needs of the County and public. By doing so, we will further the County's overall mission to promote the health, safety and quality of life for the citizens of Waukesha County and its commitment to delivering effective, high quality programs and services in a courteous and fiscally prudent manner.

We will not only use this plan as a map to meet the specific Strategic Objectives it contains, but will also utilize the Standards of Excellence it espouses to improve our department, shape our annual budget and set individual employee performance goals.

If you have any questions regarding our strategic plan, please feel free to contact me at 262-548-7432.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erik G. Weidig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "G" at the end.

Erik G. Weidig
Waukesha County Corporation Counsel

Executive Summary

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In 2014, the Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Office undertook to significantly revise its three year strategic plan from prior versions of the plan. The result – Corporation Counsel Office Strategic Plan 2014-2016 – was a plan that focused heavily on the County’s Strategic Outcomes to shape the Corporation Counsel Office’s own objectives. Overall, the Corporation Counsel Office was largely successful in, if not obtaining those objectives, making significant progress toward them.

The Corporation Counsel 2017-2019 Strategic Plan is a refocusing of our objectives in light of the County’s shift from the old “Strategic Outcomes” to the new “Pillars of Success.” It contains some Strategic Objectives from our prior plans because the issues they are meant to address are long-range or key to our operations. However, this plan also contains several new Strategic Objectives for our office. Whether new to this plan or a legacy from prior plans, all of our Strategic Objectives have been revitalized and guided by the County’s newly branded Standards of Excellence: Teamwork & Collaboration; Communication; Innovation; Ethics & Diversity; Efficiency & Cost Savings; and Wellbeing.

Each of the eight Strategic Objectives within this plan is tied to one of the five new County Pillars of Success: Customer Service; Quality; Team; Health & Safety; or Finance. While many of our Strategic Objectives implicate multiple Pillars, for the purposes of this plan, each Strategic Objective is linked to its dominant Pillar.

Customer Service

The Corporation Counsel 2017-2019 Strategic Plan places a renewed emphasis on Customer Service. This Pillar is best explained – and measured – by high customer satisfaction. The Corporation Counsel Office has many different customers, both internal to the County (i.e., departments and county employees) and external (namely, the Public whose interest we are charged with protecting in certain legal proceedings). In our role as the County’s law firm, most of our clients are internal, and our services are largely reactive based upon the needs or questions of our internal clients.

Two of our Strategic Objectives seek to improve customer service. Formal and informal surveying of our internal clients has revealed dissatisfaction or frustration with the County’s ordinance process. Though not the only department involved in this process, the Corporation Counsel Office plays a significant role in various aspects of the process, and is in a unique position to facilitate improvements to that process. [Objective 5](#) seeks to do this by having this office take a lead role in an ordinance improvement process and outlines a strategy to obtain higher customer satisfaction. The customer service focus of [Objective 7](#) is more broad. This Strategic Objective is a shared County-wide objective of establishing consistent customer service across Waukesha County departments. To achieve an annual 4.50 rating for customer service satisfaction as measured by a customer survey, this plan outlines a strategy focused on staff: recognizing and incentivizing high quality service, sharing best practices, and emphasizing customer service when setting employee annual goals.

Executive Summary continued

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Quality

This Pillar recognizes that high standards of service excellence are foundational to Waukesha County government. Two of the Corporation Counsel Office's Strategic Objectives are founded on this Pillar. [Objective 1](#) is focused on the Child Support Division of the Corporation Counsel Office and calls for bringing increased economic stability to families in need by collecting consistent monthly child support in an efficient, cost-effective manner through attainment of aggressive performance targets. The strategy for meeting this objective focuses on, among other things, the standardized use of administrative collection tools and the development of an early intervention program to provide non-paying parents with high-quality job services. [Objective 3](#) relates to the legal service the Corporation Counsel Office provides through contract review. It aims to provide our clients with quality substantive legal review of contracts in a prompt manner through a review of the workflow process, development of a tracking and reporting system, and implementation of modifications to enhance responsiveness.

Team

The best professionals serving the public in the best way is the hallmark of the Team Pillar. Training and education are at its heart. Two Strategic Objectives of this Strategic Plan have the Team Pillar as a focus. One objective looks to our own training while the other reaffirms our commitment to training others in Waukesha County government. [Objective 2](#) establishes a strategy for maximizing the performance of the Child Support Division with a focus on employee training to develop a workforce of subject-matter experts and collaboration with other departments and agencies to establish best practices and valuable working relationships. [Objective 4](#) aims to ensure legal compliance and effective implementation of the county code and policies through the office's attorneys regularly providing departments with desired training on relevant legal issues on which we are the subject-matter experts.

Health & Safety

The Pillar of Health & Safety reflects the County's crucial role in ensuring the wellbeing of the citizenry. One way in which the Corporation Counsel Office facilitates this role is through the representation of the Public interest in children in need of protection or services (CHIPS), juveniles in need of protection or services (JIPS), and termination of parental rights (TPR) cases in the juvenile court system. In 2016, the Corporation Counsel Office participated in the Child Safety Decision-Making Model initiative as part of the State's Children's Court Improvement Program. The model seeks to "improve child safety and reduce unnecessary trauma to children by ensuring the right children are in the right placements." See *Appendix B* at 1. [Objective 8](#) seeks to implement certain recommendations of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model by setting a plan for increasing Corporation Counsel participation in additional aspects of the juvenile court process and increasing the number of TPR cases timely processed upon referral from the Department of Health & Human Services.

Executive Summary continued

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Finance

The final Pillar of Success is Finance. This Pillar means government must wisely protect the taxpayer's investment and dictates that we find efficiencies and costs savings where we can. The Corporation Counsel's Office is no exception. As we continue to be asked to do more with less, it is critical that we utilize available technology to its fullest to help find and realize those efficiencies and cost savings. [Objective 6](#) does this by setting a course to more effectively use available technology to streamline our record management and retention. Effective and efficient record management saves both time (the time it takes to locate or recreate a document) and money (storage costs, computer memory, and retrieval fees).

The eight Strategic Objectives found in this Strategic Plan set the course for the Waukesha County Corporation Counsel Office over the next three years. They reflect each of the Pillars of Success identified by Waukesha County. With the County's Standards of Excellence as a guide, the Corporation Counsel Office will diligently pursue these objectives. They will improve our department, shape our annual budget and influence each individual employee's performance goals.

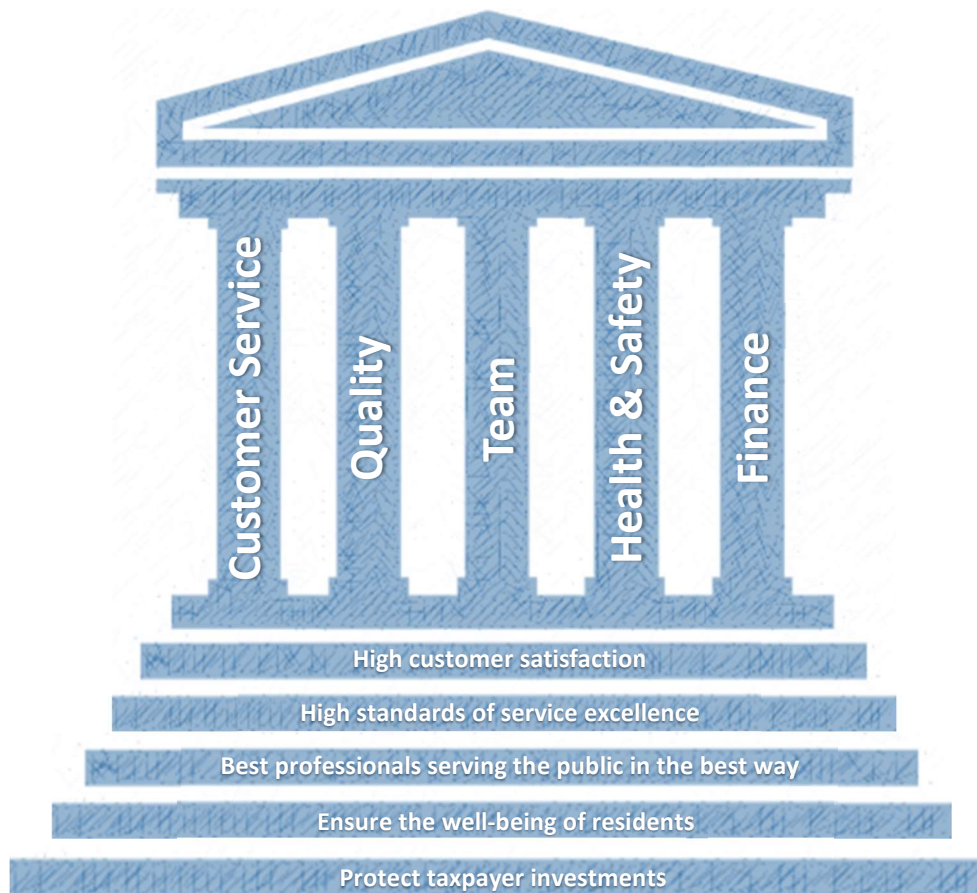
County Mission Statement

“The mission of the Waukesha County government is to promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens while fostering an economically vibrant community. We are committed to delivering effective, high quality programs and services in a courteous and fiscally prudent manner.”

Standards of Excellence

- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Communication
- Innovation
- Ethics & Diversity
- Efficiency & Cost Savings
- Wellbeing

County Pillars



Department Statement of Purpose

“It is the mission of the Corporation Counsel Office to improve the quality of life for all residents of Waukesha County by facilitating effective policy making and administrative decision making of the County Board and County Executive; to provide for the establishment and enforcement of financial support for needy children and establish care for the mentally ill and elderly infirm; to cooperate in providing stability for dysfunctional families through the Juvenile Court System; to assist in establishing and enforcing land use plans and zoning regulations; to enforce ordinances; to give sound legal advice to all County Departments, Boards and Commissions to assist them in effectively carrying out their functions; and to respond to the legal needs of County employees whose function is to provide various governmental services to the Public.”

Strategic Objectives at a glance

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- 1) [Bring increased economic stability to families in need by collecting consistent monthly child support in a cost-effective manner; in doing so, obtain maximum funding by meeting the aggressive performance targets set by the Department of Children and Families.](#)
- 2) [Maximize performance by providing our employees with the most effective, up-to-date training and tools available.](#)
- 3) [Provide clients quality and timely review of contracts by completing initial legal review and providing comment to submitting department on greater than 95% of all contracts within 3 business days by December 31, 2019.](#)
- 4) [Ensure legal compliance and effective implementation of county code and policies by providing an average of 10 hours per year of relevant legal training/education to internal clients by December 31, 2019.](#)
- 5) [Improve customer satisfaction with the county ordinance process to obtain an average score of 8 out of 10 on annual customer feedback form.](#)
- 6) [Develop and implement an effective office record management and retention system which reduces email inbox storage and off-site storage by 20% to reduce storage costs and retrieval fees and create efficiencies by December 2018.](#)
- 7) [Establish consistent customer service across Waukesha County departments to achieve an annual 4.50 mean rating for customer service satisfaction.](#)
- 8) [Implement recommendations of Child Safety Decision-Making Model to better serve the interest of the public in general and children in need in particular by increasing attorney participation in additional aspects of the juvenile court process and by increasing the number of TPR cases timely processed upon referral from DHHS by 50% by December 31, 2019.](#)



Tip: Click title to jump to objective detail

Strategic Objectives

Pillar: Quality



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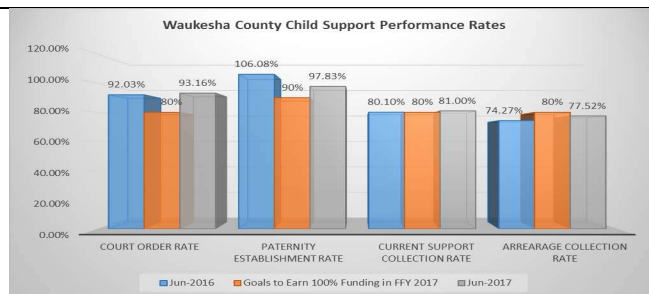


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Objective 1: Bring increased economic stability to families in need by collecting consistent monthly child support in a cost-effective manner; in doing so, obtain maximum funding by meeting the aggressive performance targets set by the Department of Children and Families.

Owner: Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division

Performance Measure: Obtain 80% or better on current support collections, arrears collections, and court order establishment rate. Obtain 90% or better paternity establishment rate.



Learn More:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/home>

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Maximize the use of administrative enforcement tools such as account seizures, property liens, and license suspensions by creating formal written policies that standardize how and when workers use these tools.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division (Enforcement Unit)	September 30, 2018
Minimize unpaid arrears by ensuring that court-ordered repayment plans are in place when children emancipate and when accounts fall into arrears.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division (Fiscal Unit)	June 30, 2018
Create an early intervention program to quickly identify non-custodial parents who fail to pay child support due to unemployment or underemployment, and provide them with high quality court-ordered job services.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division (Enforcement Unit and Legal Unit)	June 30, 2018
When establishing or modifying child support orders, review every case individually to ensure that the needs of the family are met within Federal guidelines regarding the parent's ability to pay.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division (Legal Unit)	December 31, 2017

Pillar: Team

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Objective 2: Maximize performance by providing our employees with the most effective, up-to-date training and tools available.	
Owner: Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division	
Performance Measure: Attorneys and workers are viewed as leaders in their field and contribute to statewide trainings, conferences, workgroups, and committees.	
	Learn More:

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Set annual goal for child support attorneys to participate in at least one statewide workgroup or committee per year, and for the most senior attorneys to present or otherwise contribute to a statewide conference or panel.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division (Legal Unit)	January 1, 2018
Implement a program to cross-train workers within the agency to share employee knowledge and ensure that workers are properly trained in every aspect of their job.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division	December 31, 2018
Take advantage of trainings provided by the state to stay on the cutting edge of new technologies, procedures, and regulations.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division	December 31, 2017
Collaborate with other child support agencies to determine best practices and receive assistance when implementing new programs or technologies.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division	December 31, 2018

Pillar: Quality

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Objective 3: Provide clients quality and timely review of contracts by completing initial legal review and providing comment to submitting department on greater than 95% of all contracts within 3 business days by December 31, 2019.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: Time that it takes to review contracts.

Performance Measure:	2016 Actual	2017 Target	2017 Estimate	2018 Target	Learn More:
Percent of review and return contract within 72 hours (Dept. standard is 4 business days)	97%	>90%	>95%	>90%	

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Outline contract workflow process for check in, review & comment, initial response and contract completion documentation.	Corporation Counsel	December 2017
Develop contract tracking system in Needles or alternate computer system.	Corporation Counsel – Office Services Coordinator	March 2018
Implement contract tracking system and monitor monthly reporting.	Corporation Counsel	April 2018 – December 2018
Meet to review status and implement any necessary process or staffing changes.	Corporation Counsel – Management	January 2019

Pillar: Team

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Objective 4: Ensure legal compliance and effective implementation of county code and policies by providing an average of 10 hours per year of relevant legal training/education to internal clients by December 31, 2019.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: Number of hours of training provided annually to county departments.

Learn More:

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Survey attorneys regarding areas of perceived need and expertise to identify discrete areas of training that would benefit clients.	Corporation Counsel	September 2017
Meet with departments to gather input on desired legal training.	Corporation Counsel - Attorneys	December 2017
Develop initial training materials and training schedule.	Corporation Counsel - Attorneys	March 2018
Create and maintain SharePoint site for training outlines and materials.	Corporation Counsel – Office Services Coordinator	March 2018
Roll out training schedule and conduct training sessions.	Corporation Counsel - Attorneys	April 2018 – December 2019
Monitor legal developments by area/topic and update trainings as necessary.	Corporation Counsel – Attorneys	April 2018 – December 2019

Pillar: Customer Service

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Objective 5: Improve customer satisfaction with the county ordinance process to obtain an average score of 8 out of 10 on annual customer feedback form.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: Through annual surveying of internal clients, overall satisfaction with the ordinance process will be measured on a scale of 1-10.

Learn More:

[Customer Feedback Form Regarding the Ordinance Process](#)

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Initial surveying and meetings with key departments.	Corporation Counsel	December 2017
Review internal process for review and processing of ordinances. Consider and implement appropriate timing, review, SharePoint and County Code update modifications to the process.	Corporation Counsel	March 2018
Create procedure and timeline for ordinances creating major code revisions.	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorneys	August 2018
Provide/coordinate training to key departmental personnel on ordinance drafting and use of SharePoint	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorneys	January 2018 – December 2019
Conduct annual survey, analyze results and identify and implement process changes.	Corporation Counsel	December 2018 - December 2019

Pillar: Finance


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Objective 6: Develop and implement an effective office record management and retention system which reduces email inbox storage and off-site storage by 20% to reduce storage costs and retrieval fees and create efficiencies by December 2018.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: Percent reduction of email inbox storage and storage/retrieval fees.

Learn More:

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Finalize a uniform naming/filing protocol for electronic files by department on the N drive.	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorneys	December 2017
Cease utilization of staff name based folder electronic filing and migrate old files to new filing protocol as time permits.	Corporation Counsel – All Staff	December 2018
Establish Outlook email filing protocol that mirrors new electronic file name conventions.	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorneys	December 2017
Consistently implement document retention/destruction policy to paper, electronic and Outlook files – including ECM/Email policy to reduce needless retention of transitory correspondence and similar documents.	Corporation Counsel – All Staff	December 2018
Create a form bank/sample/resource library for easy access and recreation of key document types.	Corporation Counsel – All Attorneys	December 2019
Convert guardianship case files to electronic storage to reduce storage costs.	Corporation Counsel – Office Services Coordinator	April 2018
As appropriate, scan and purge child support files to reduce office storage.	Corporation Counsel – Child Support Division	June 2018

Pillar: Customer Service

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Objective 7: Establish consistent customer service across Waukesha County departments to achieve an annual 4.50 mean rating for customer service satisfaction.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: Through on-going surveying of external and internal customers, service satisfaction will be measured through six metrics of accessibility, accuracy, attitude, operations, timeliness and communication. The survey gathers feedback on a scale of 1-5.

Learn More:

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Recognize and incentivize high quality customer service through office employee recognition program.	Corporation Counsel	September 2017 – December 2019
Include discussion of strategic plan and customer service pillar at all-department staff meeting.	Corporation Counsel	October 2017
Identify customer service top performers and develop customer service/best practices training.	Corporation Counsel – Office Services Coordinator(s)	December 2017
Implement customer service/best practices training for staff.	Corporation Counsel – Office Services Coordinator(s)	January 2018
Incorporate one customer service based goal into all staff annual goals and measure in annual employee evaluations.	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorneys and Supervisors	January 2018 December 2019

Pillar: Health & Safety

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Objective 8: Implement recommendations of Child Safety Decision-Making Model to better serve the interest of the public in general and children in need in particular by increasing attorney participation in additional aspects of the juvenile court process and by increasing the number of TPR cases timely processed upon referral from DHHS by 50% by December 31, 2019.

Owner: Corporation Counsel

Performance Measure: The number of Juvenile Court Petitions (CHIPS, JIPS, Truancies and TPRS) filed on a year over year basis.

Learn More:

<https://www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/ccipsummaryreport.pdf>

[Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase I Report](#)

[Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase 3 Report](#)

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
Meet with key players at DHHS and develop plan for prioritizing TPR referrals and selectively utilizing outside counsel when appropriate and necessary.	Corporation Counsel	September 2017
Appear at all plea hearings for which the office has filed a petition under s. 48.30 or 938.30, Wis. Stats.	Corporation Counsel – Juvenile Attorneys	November 1, 2017
Coordinate with DHHS and Clerk of Courts regarding prioritizing and appropriately scheduling TPC and Detention hearings.	Corporation Counsel	December 2017
Develop hearing type hierarchy with Juvenile Court to best utilize attorney time and resources.	Corporation Counsel	July 2018
Regularly appear at appropriate TPC and Detention hearings.	Corporation Counsel – Juvenile Attorneys	August 1, 2018
Actively monitor TPR referrals and case filings to ensure reasonable progression toward goal.	Corporation Counsel – Managing Attorney	September 2017 – December 2019

Appendix A – Customer Feedback Form Regarding the Ordinance Process



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Corporation Counsel
Erik G. Weidig



Customer Feedback Form Regarding the Ordinance Process

(For all questions, use a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being dissatisfied and 10 being satisfied.)

For this form, the phases of the “ordinance process” are:

- Phase 1: Drafting the ordinance, researching, viewing prior similar ordinances, verifying legal and budget authority for the action, policy considerations, discussing with the County Executive, using the correct format, etc.
- Phase 2: SharePoint processing, including uploading ordinances and attachments and printing ordinances from libraries.
- Phase 3: County Board committee meetings and County Board approval process.
- Phase 4: Clerk assigns enrolled number and Editor updates codes, if necessary.

1. What is your overall satisfaction with the ordinance process on a scale of 1 to 10?

2. What is your level of involvement with each phase of the ordinance process?
(Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no involvement and 10 being a very high level of involvement.)

Phase 1: _____
Phase 2: _____
Phase 3: _____
Phase 4: _____

3. What is your level of satisfaction with each phase of the ordinance process?

Phase 1: _____
Phase 2: _____
Phase 3: _____
Phase 4: _____

4. Are there changes that could improve the ordinance process? If yes, identify which phase and explain the



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change.

Phase 1:

Phase 2:

Phase 3:

Phase 4:

5. Do you need education or training regarding any of the phases of the ordinance process? If so, what type?

Phase 1:

Phase 2:

Phase 3:

Phase 4:

6. In Phase 1, do you seek legal approval for the ordinance from the Corporation Counsel Office? If no, why not? _____

7. What can the Corporation Counsel Office do to increase your satisfaction with the ordinance process?

Optional: Name _____

Appendix B – Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase I Report



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CHILD SAFETY DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Waukesha County
Phase One Report

Prepared by:
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A. INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts is charged with developing and institutionalizing meaningful collaboration across systems to identify and address barriers to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being at the state and local levels. In an effort to continue improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care, the Commission convened the Child Safety Decision-Making Subcommittee, which is staffed by the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP). The Subcommittee is comprised of state, county, and tribal representatives working in the child welfare and court systems. It is charged with educating child welfare, court, and legal professionals on child safety, creating a common language across disciplines, and implementing consistent child safety practices across the state of Wisconsin. The group has been meeting on a quarterly basis since May of 2014.

Background Information

The Subcommittee began this work by participating in a training based upon the American Bar Association publication, "Child Safety: Guide for Judges and Attorneys." The training focused on providing education on the concepts used by a majority of jurisdictions in determining safety for children who come in contact with the child welfare system. The Subcommittee agreed to adopt this model, as it is very similar to the Safety Intervention Standards promulgated by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.

The Subcommittee believed that the use of the Child Safety Guide would increase knowledge of a common language on child safety and increase consistency in child safety decision-making throughout the life of a case. The Subcommittee felt that more effort was needed to ensure that decisions are based upon a thorough assessment of safety, and that other factors not directly related to safety (e.g., type of maltreatment alone, parent's long history with the agency, whether parent has completed all of the conditions for return, etc.) are minimized. The Subcommittee determined that these goals would increase the likelihood of more confident decision-making and decrease the negative impact of unnecessary removal. The outcomes of these changes are hoped to bring about a shift in culture about the process of removal, including the Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) Hearing, to better engage the parties in the court process.

The Subcommittee agreed to implement a pilot project in counties of various sizes to determine if the Child Safety Decision-Making Model would be an effective tool in meeting their goals. This Model would be introduced in three pilot counties in 2016. The ultimate premise of the Model is to improve child safety and reduce unnecessary trauma to children by ensuring the right children are in the right placements. This would mean that the children who need to be removed are removed and the children who can safely be maintained in the home remain with their parents. The Subcommittee and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) assisted in developing review tools, as well as training materials to educate all legal, judicial, and child welfare professionals on the Child Safety Decision-Making Model. Even though child welfare professionals are already extensively training on this topic, they are included in the training so that all parties start to engage in discussions regarding the Model and to enhance the training by contributing their expertise and knowledge on child safety. The training also helps the parties understand each other's roles in the court process.

Timeline

The timeline for the Child Safety Decision-Making Model is broken into three phases. This report represents the last part in the completion of Phase One.

Phase One: Project Preparation (Length: 45 days)

1. Model County will designate a primary contact person for CCIP to coordinate the training dates and times.
2. CCIP will conduct court observation and court case file reviews in CHIPS proceedings to establish a baseline measure.
3. The safety decision-making training will be given to the Model County.
4. CCIP will share results from the court observation and court file review after the training and assist in the development of an implementation plan for the Model County.

Phase Two: Implementation and Application Analysis (Length: 6-12 months)

1. Model County will work on using the safety decision-making language and the TPC Request form, the TPC Supplement, and provided tools when deciding and conducting TPC Hearings.
2. Model County should meet on a periodic basis to discuss the project progress and may invite CCIP to meetings as determined by the Model County.
3. CCIP will continue to be available during the measurement period for consultation and assistance, as needed by the Model County.
4. 3-6 months after training: CCIP may conduct focus groups or surveys to obtain feedback from stakeholders regarding the implementation process.
5. 6 months & 12 months after training: CCIP will conduct another set of court file reviews and/or court observation for each of those time periods.

Phase Three: Project Conclusion

1. CCIP will provide results of the information collected from the court observation and court file review conducted over the last 12 months.
2. CCIP may meet with the Model County to discuss findings and any next steps.
3. CCIP will provide the comprehensive report of the data and feedback to the Subcommittee and the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts.

CCIP will provide additional training, feedback, and assistance to help support the county during all stages of this undertaking.

Goals

The primary goals of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model are as follows:

1. Increase the knowledge of legal and judicial participants in the Child Safety Decision-Making Process.
2. Increase the use of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model Process in court proceedings by all parties through the use of the instruments provided by CCIP.
3. Increase the discussion detail on child safety at temporary physical custody request hearings.

Outcomes

Some of the anticipated outcomes of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model include:

1. More confident decision-making by courts and parties.
2. Increased transparency in hearings, so that families better understand the basis for removal decisions.
3. Increased family engagement in the court process.
4. Increased understanding of the child safety process by all case participants and stakeholders.

Data Collection

Data will be collected in each Model County before, during, and at the conclusion of the measurement period using court observation, court file review, focus groups/surveys, and other existing data to identify trends, strengths, areas for improvement, and any change in practice as a result of the project.

Court File Review. In each county reviewed, the case sample consists of CHIPS circuit court cases where a child was removed from the home within set time period in the previous year. In situations where a sibling group is involved, a maximum of two sibling cases will be reviewed.

Court Observation. CCIP staff will observe Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) Hearings in CHIPS cases that occur during Phase One and Phase Two of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model. If a sibling's case is heard at the same time, information on only one of the children is captured.

Surveys/Focus Groups. Written surveys and/or focus groups are conducted in each county to assess compliance with the child safety model, information provided to case participants when a child is removed from the home, and thoroughness of placement decisions and applicable hearings. Focus groups are typically conducted with: judicial officers, tribal representatives (if applicable), county child welfare agency staff, and attorneys involved in child welfare cases.

To ensure fidelity to the child safety decision-making model, the participating county will be required to use specific circuit court forms, including the *Temporary Physical Custody Request* (JC-1608) and the *Temporary Physical Custody Request Supplement* (JC-1609). In addition, using the materials provided at the training is highly recommended.

Performance Indicators

In addition to the data collection described above, CCIP or the Model County may wish to examine the following performance indicators to determine whether there is any correlation with these outcomes and use of the child safety decision-making model:

1. Re-entry into out-of-home care after case closure.
2. Length of time to reunification/permanency.
3. Length of time in out-of-home care.
4. Percentage of cases achieving reunification.

B. INITIAL FINDINGS

CCIP completed its initial data collection for Waukesha County by conducting court file reviews, court observation, and a participant survey in order to determine a baseline measurement. This data collection was completed prior to the Child Safety Decision-Making Model training provided to the stakeholders. This report will examine the county's practices related to child safety, including strengths and areas for focus/improvement, prior to the training.

How data was interpreted and used:

It is important to note that this report is based upon fact dependent information from a limited sample size, and should not reflect standard practice in the county. These findings are intended to be used as a starting point in implementing the model for the purposes of measuring changes in TPC hearings.

1. Court File Review

The data collection tool used for the court file review was created by CCIP, with the assistance of the Subcommittee and the NCJFCJ. It is based on the framework and requirements contained in the Child Safety Guide and Wisconsin's Safety Intervention Standards. The court file review focused strictly on the extent to which safety topics were documented in the court file. Since no other sources were examined for the missing information, it is possible that the information could have been either in the agency file or discussed on the record in the hearing. Any possible missing information from the court file should not be interpreted to mean that there was an issue with the case as a whole.

The information examined includes the court hearing minutes, petitions, TPC requests and supporting documentation, reports filed with the court (e.g., permanency plan, memos, and court report), and any court orders that identified information relevant to child safety.

A total of 19 CHIPS cases opened between 01/01/2015-03/31/2015 were reviewed, although only 16 were used for full data collection purposes. (Three of the files did not have any information regarding a TPC Hearing and were excluded from the results.) If a case involved multiple siblings, only two of the sibling files were reviewed. The files were examined to determine if there was safety information regarding each specific child.

The chart below summarizes the level of detail contained in the court files for the safety topics. The agency has 60 days to obtain this information through their initial assessment. The topics in bold are the minimum requirements for determining safety and should be known to the agency and discussed before or at the TPC Hearing. In general, if a present danger threat is identified early in the course of agency involvement, it may be likely that little to no information would be known about certain topics such as the child's daily functioning and discipline of the child. It is common for a TPC Hearing to be conducted without this information, but it should be known by the social worker or an explanation provided as to why it was not found by the end of the initial assessment period. The areas of focus for this report will be to the topics in bold since these are the focal point of the data collection.

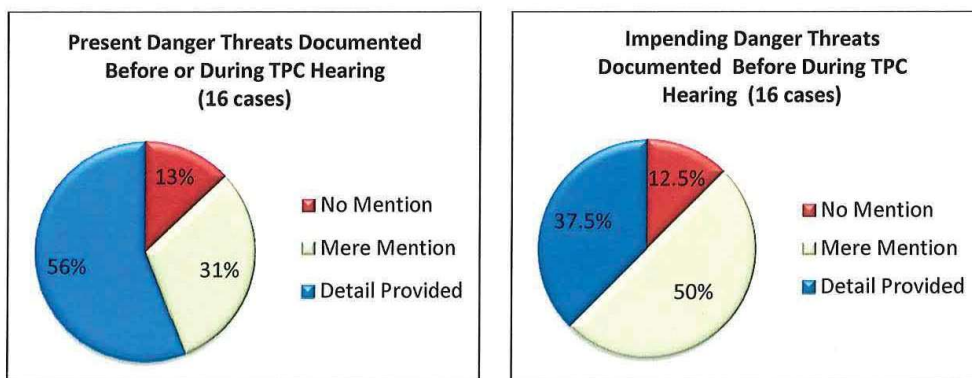
Extent topics addressed prior to or at TPC Hearing?	No Mention of Topic	Mere Mention of Topic	More than a Statement	N/A
Nature and extent of maltreatment	0	3	13	0
Circumstances with maltreatment	0	3	13	0
Child's daily functioning	7	3	6	0
Discipline of child(ren)	9	1	3	3
Parenting practices	1	6	9	0
Parents' life management skills	2	5	9	0
Present threats of danger	2	5	9	0
Impending threats of danger	2	8	6	0
Child vulnerability	4	7	5	0
Parental protective capacities	0	10	6	0
Safety Plan (discussed or considered)	4	8	4	0

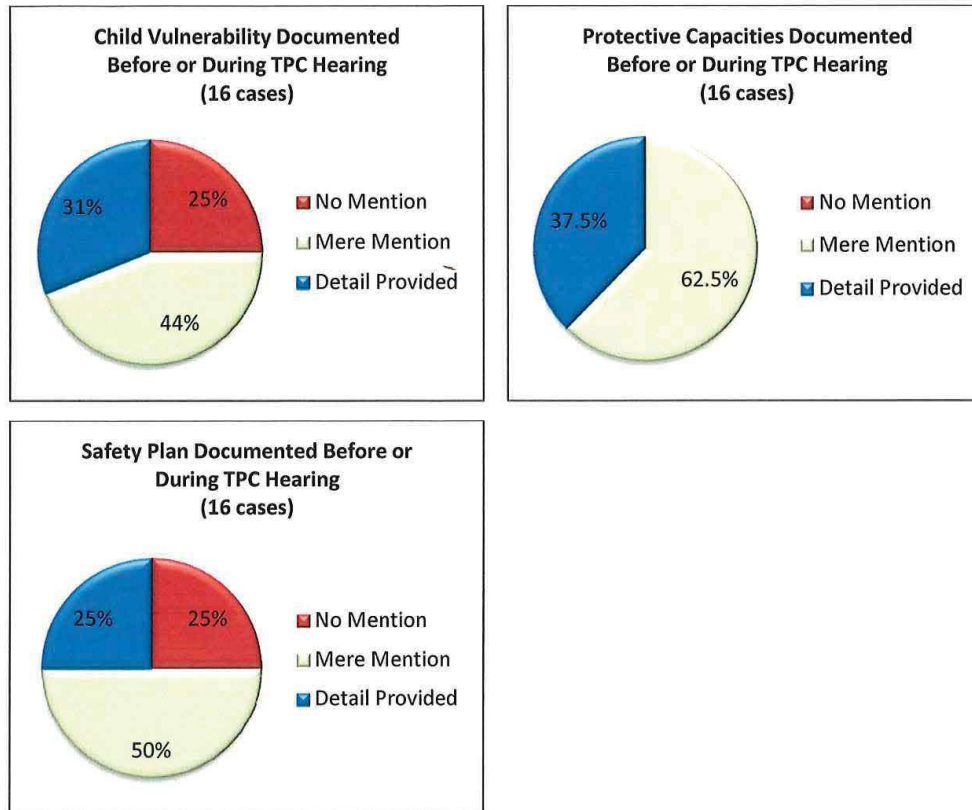
Strengths

Overall, the court files exhibited a number of strengths based upon the pre-model data collected. In all cases reviewed, there was some mention of parental protective capacities and the nature and the circumstances accompanying maltreatment. Over 80% of the TPC Orders contained information related to safety, which suggests that social workers are providing information on a wide range of topics for the court to consider on safety. In examining the chart, it is noted that the agency is able to obtain nearly all the information needed by the end of the assessment period, which indicates that social workers are able to complete their assessments in a timely manner. The content of the files examined also indicated a consistent need for court intervention.

Areas for focus of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model

Now that all county stakeholders have been training on the Child Safety Decision-Making Model, the data can assist the county in efforts to implement the Model and increase the likelihood that the court has at least minimum information related to the core safety topics: present or impending danger threats, child vulnerability, parental protective capacities, and attempts or considerations for safety planning.





As illustrated in the graphs above, the data from the court file review suggests additional attention is needed for the categories of child vulnerability and safety plans. 25% of the court files contained no mention of those topics prior to or at the TPC Hearing. The information contained in the court file did not reflect if this information may already been obtained by the social worker or was available elsewhere.

Another observation made during the court file review was the absence of the TPC Request circuit court form from several of the files reviewed. Instead, Waukesha County used a form that they created to notify the court of the agency's decision to take a child into temporary physical custody and request a hearing, which was considered a supplement to the TPC Request form. During the court file review, it was noted that the TPC Request form (JD-1710) could not be located in 12 of the files. The agency filed the county-created supplement without the TPC Request form.

The following information was not included on the supplement:

1. The date and time the child was taken into temporary physical custody.
2. Notification to parents of the custody decision.
3. Notification to the parents as to the date and time of the hearing.

The absence of this form made it difficult to determine from the court file when the parents were notified of the custody decision and the hearing, as required under §48.20(8)(a) Wis. Stats.

The Records Management Committee approved a new form, the TPC Request Supplement (JC-1609) in November of 2015, and this form should replace the supplement previously created by Waukesha County during Phase Two of the Model. This form should be submitted in conjunction with the newly revised TPC Request form (JC-1608), which was revised for use in Chapter 48 cases. Form JD-1710 was also revised but should be used only for Chapter 938 cases.

2. Court Observation

The data collection tool used for the court observation was created by CCIP, with the assistance of the Subcommittee and the NCJFCJ. In January and February of 2016, CCIP observed a total of 9 Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) Hearings. A total of 5 cases were able to be used for analysis. The court commissioners conducted all the hearings which were observed. TPC Hearings were chosen for review due to their direct correlation with the child safety training and model. The purpose of the court observation was to determine a baseline for measuring possible changes in the type and amount of information presented and discussed at hearings.

A significant amount of information was gathered during the court observation related to child safety. As with the court file reviews, child safety topics were examined for the extent to which the topics were addressed at the TPC Hearing alone and no additional sources of information were reviewed. The information was categorized as follows: no mention of the topic, only mere mention of the topic, or more than a statement regarding the topic. A topic was scored as mere mention of a topic if the discussion was equivalent to a single statement regarding that particular topic.

Strengths

The data from the court observation showed strengths in several categories. In all hearings where a parent attended in person or by phone, the Court addressed the parent and explained the purpose of the hearing. All of the parties were also treated respectfully. In all 5 of the hearings, the nature and extent of the maltreatment and threats of danger were mentioned during the TPC Hearings. Information on both parenting practices and the parent's life management skills were presented at all of the hearings.

In Waukesha County, workload and time conflicts prevent Corporation Counsel from attending all TPC Hearings. The social workers came prepared to hearings and provided clear information in response to questioning by the court. The Court also made the contrary to the welfare and reasonable efforts findings on the record in all hearings with an out-of-home placement. The court took an active role in questioning the parties to obtain information that they believed would assist in making findings.

Areas for Focus of the Child Safety Model

While the sample was quite small and cannot be taken to be generalized for all TPC Hearings, the data indicated some topics that the parties will want to direct their attention to ensure that the minimum amount of information is provided for a safety determination. TPC Hearings typically occur within a day

or two after the children have been taken into custody, and the timing of these hearings may leave little time to gather all needed details for a complete assessment.

In 3 of the 5 hearings, there was no mention made of child vulnerability. While understanding that 2 cases were in-home placements and that the age of the child in and of itself is a vulnerability factor, it was not expressed on the record. Furthermore, vulnerability is still a necessary factor in the safety equation, and should be addressed in a TPC Hearing even in the event of an in-home placement.

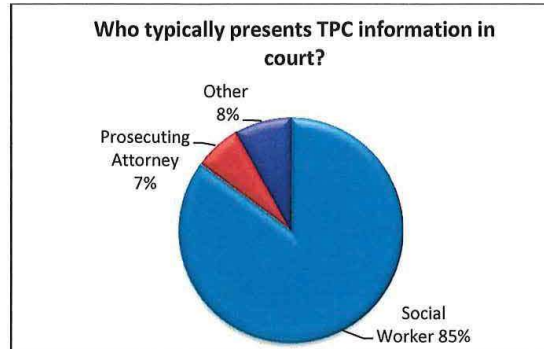
In 3 of the 4 hearings that involved a sibling group, the safety for each individual child in the home was not discussed. For example, an unavailable parent is an obvious concern for each child, but it is helpful to identify such vulnerabilities on the record. Finally, it was also noted that protective capacities were not addressed in one of the hearings in which an out-of-home placement occurred. It may have been the intention of the social worker to indicate such information within one of the other safety topics, but it is easier to identify in a format that discusses the topics separately, so as to provide structure to the decision-making process. This structure allows the court to easily identify each safety factor so the court can specifically determine why the removal was necessary to protect the child from any identified danger threats.

3. Stakeholder Surveys

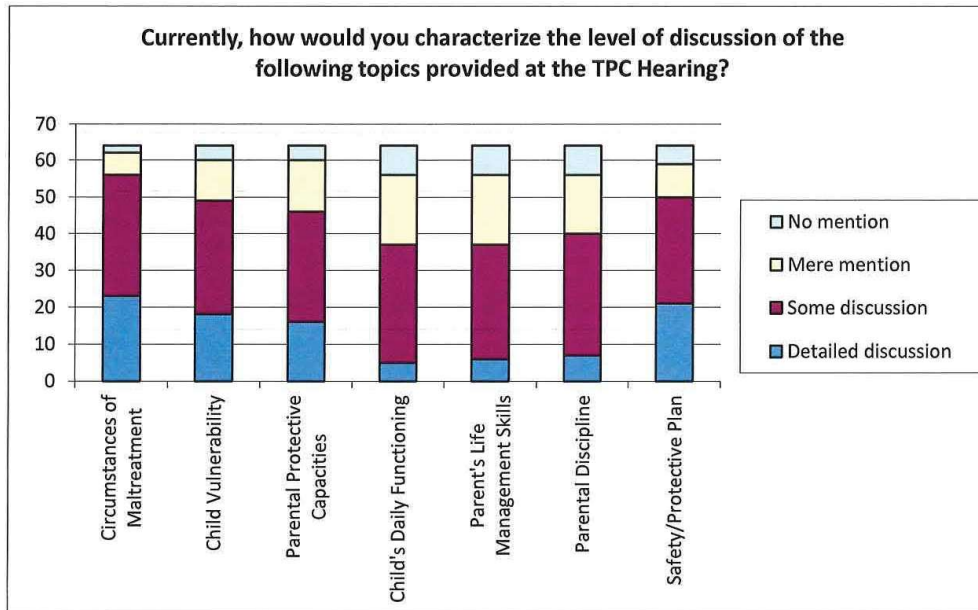
Prior to attending the Model training, the participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding their beliefs about the extent to which child safety topics are addressed in court hearings. A total of 115 surveys were distributed to stakeholders and a total of 75 were completed. The survey contained the following questions:

1. What best describes your role in court?
2. What information is typically provided to you before a hearing?
3. Who typically presents the TPC information in court?
4. Currently, how would you characterize the level of discussion of the following topics provided prior to the TPC Hearing?
5. Currently, how would you characterize the level of discussion of the following topics provided at the TPC Hearing?
6. What goals would you like to achieve by participating in the Child Safety Decision-Making Model?
7. Please provide any comments or concerns you may have regarding the current TPC process, or any other information that you believe could be addressed in juvenile court in Waukesha County.

As illustrated in the graph below, the responses to Question 3 of the survey suggests that the social worker is the person who typically presents the information in court at TPC Hearings.

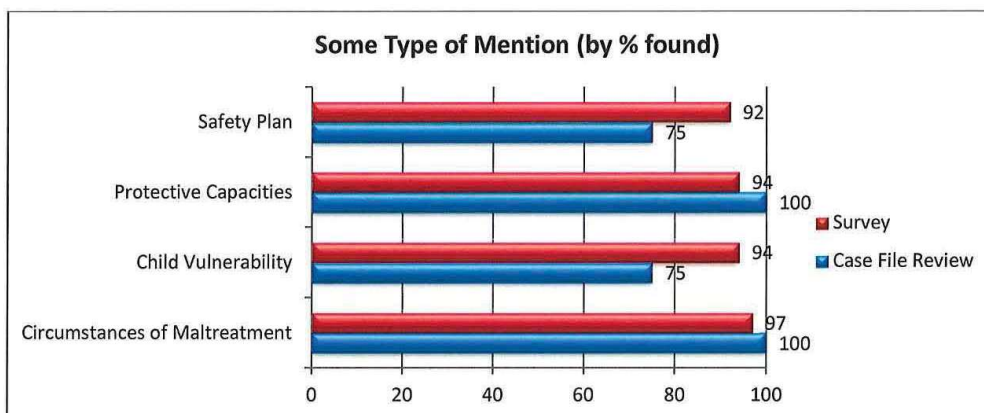
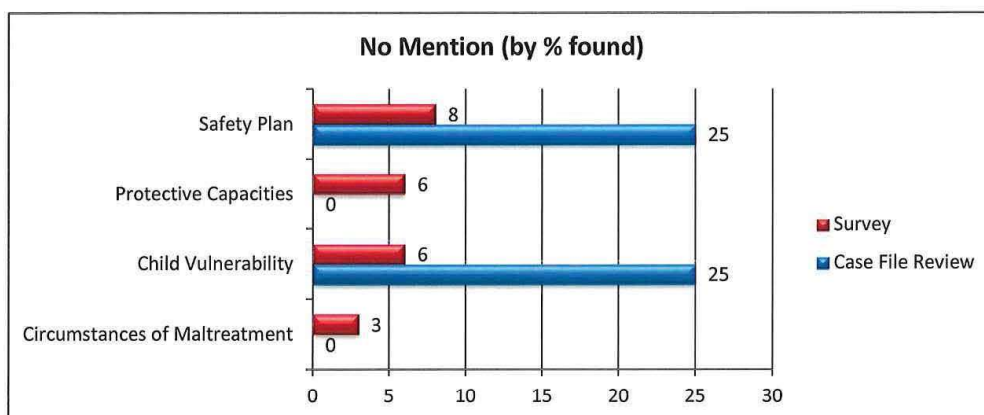


Stakeholders were asked to report the level of discussion that they see occur prior to and in court regarding specific safety topics. The graph below indicates their response to Question 5: the level of discussion occurring at the TPC Hearing for each safety topic. A total of 65 participants answered this survey question. This chart shows that stakeholders find that they perceive the information as being consistently provided.



4. Comparison of Survey Data to Court File Review Data

CCIP compared the survey data results with the data collected from the court case file reviews to determine any similarities or differences. The graphs below reflect a comparison of the findings based upon the amount of discussion or information before or at the TPC Hearing on four of the key safety topics. The values are expressed in percentages. The data collected from the survey and the case file review indicate some consistencies between the surveys and the case file reviews. There were some slight differences and, in a couple of instances, the case file review actually found better documentation than the survey participants indicated. The red columns represent the perceptions of the stakeholders and the blue columns represent the findings from the case file review sample.



The comparison graphs above show the file review findings for the circumstances of maltreatment for no mention or mere mention of certain topics to be fairly consistent with the survey results. The topics with the biggest discrepancies between the two sources are the safety plan and child vulnerability. As noted earlier in the case file findings, the topics that lacked information were those related to the safety plan and

child vulnerability. It is very possible that the information was obtained by the social worker, or that the social worker was aware of the information, but it was not clearly communicated in the files or on the record to the court. As a best practice standard, even topics that appear obvious (such as the age of the child) would be best addressed in the documentation or on the record to ensure completeness. Topics such as consideration of a safety plan and reasons why it would not work in each case should be discussed to provide clarity for decision-making. Given the time constraints that occur for TPC Hearings, some mention, or even mere mention would be sufficient, as long as the information is fully explained by the end of the initial assessment period.

Goals of Participants

In Question 6, the stakeholders were asked to choose goals that they wish to accomplish from the Child Safety Decision-Making Model. Here are the goals that were selected most frequently:

- 1st: Better understanding of child safety decision-making process.
- 2nd: Increased confidence in safety decisions.

These goals fit in with the purpose of the Model, and CCIP will continue to collect data that will assist in determining whether the Model will accomplish these goals. Periodic meetings with stakeholders may also help guide the participants in meeting these goals.

C. SUGGESTED STEPS FOR PHASE TWO

1. It will be helpful for all case participants/parties to examine the information they receive to determine if it meets the safety equation elements for finding a child safe or unsafe, and asking for additional information or making inquiries on the record to ensure clarity.
2. The new circuit forms should be used for all TPC Hearings. The TPC Supplement can help all participants quickly determine if certain topics need clarity from the agency. Consistent use of the safety assessment process will increase fidelity to the model and increase understanding, which will hopefully reflect increase confidence in Child Safety Decision-Making.
3. Stakeholder feedback and questions to CCIP are encouraged. Questions can be provided through the Juvenile Court Clerk or Corporation Counsel. Stakeholders may want to meet periodically to discuss the Model, either with or without CCIP staff.
4. The purpose of the data collection was to establish a baseline for the Model and should not be interpreted to find any inadequacies with any of the participants. The case file data and the court observation data was only a small sampling of the cases in the county.

Appendix C – Child Safety Decision-Making Model Phase 3 Report



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CHILD SAFETY DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Waukesha County

Phase Three Report

12-Month Findings

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Introduction

This report summarizes the data results from the final phase of the Child Safety Decision-Making Model in Waukesha County. The report describes the results of the final data collection from the end of the Implementation Phase of the project, progress on the goals of the Model County, feedback from participants on the Model itself, and a discussion of noted changes in practice. Themes (or trends) that emerged out of this data are also discussed. CCIP may examine additional outcomes after the completion of the pilot in the two other pilot counties.

Background Information

The Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts is charged with developing and institutionalizing meaningful collaboration across systems to identify and address barriers to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being at the state and local levels. In an effort to continue improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care, the Commission convened the Child Safety Decision-Making Subcommittee, which is staffed by the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP). The Subcommittee is comprised of state, county, and tribal representatives working in the child welfare and court systems. It is charged with educating child welfare, court and legal professionals on child safety, creating a common language across disciplines, and implementing consistent child safety practices across the state of Wisconsin.

As part of the subcommittee work, a pilot project, the Child Safety Decision-Making Model, was created. Specifically, the project is focused on incorporating a child safety model into the temporary physical custody hearing process. Waukesha County agreed to participate in the Child Safety Decision-Making Model in late 2015. The baseline data was gathered in late 2015, and training on the Child Safety Model was provided to Waukesha County in February of 2016. Implementation of the Model in Waukesha began on March 1, 2016 and concluded on February 28, 2017. During implementation of the Model, CCIP collected data and offered additional assistance to help support the county during the project implementation.

The goals of the Model are:

1. Increase the knowledge of legal and judicial participants in the Child Safety Decision-Making process.
2. Increase the discussion detail on child safety at temporary physical custody hearings.

Data Collection

For the final phase of the project, CCIP collected data through a court file review, an online survey of attorneys, and focus groups with judicial officials and human services staff. The file review, survey and focus group information was used to determine whether any progress on the goals of the Model occurred. CCIP attempted to conduct court observation for the final phase, but was unable to attend any additional hearings during the last data collection period.

In addition to gathering information identical to the past collection periods, the files were reviewed to determine whether the *Temporary Physical Custody Request* (JC-1608) and the *Temporary Physical Custody Request Supplement* (JC-1609) circuit court forms were used as required under the Model. The Model County was also encouraged to use the Benchcards provided at the training. CCIP requested feedback from stakeholders regarding the circuit court forms, tools, and project in general.

Court File Review

For the 12-month review, CCIP collected data to compare to the initial and the 6-month data on the required safety topics for the Model. CCIP pulled a list of new CHIPS petitions filed during the second half of the Implementation Phase of the project, specifically from September 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017. Cases for review were chosen at random by selecting every third CHIPS case filed. In cases involving multiple sibling files, CCIP reviewed a single case file. All those cases were screened for evidence of a temporary physical custody hearing. CCIP searched each case file for relevant documentation, including the court hearing minutes, CHIPS petitions, TPC requests and supporting documentation, reports filed with the court (e.g., permanency plan, memos, and court report), as well as any court orders that identify information related to child safety.

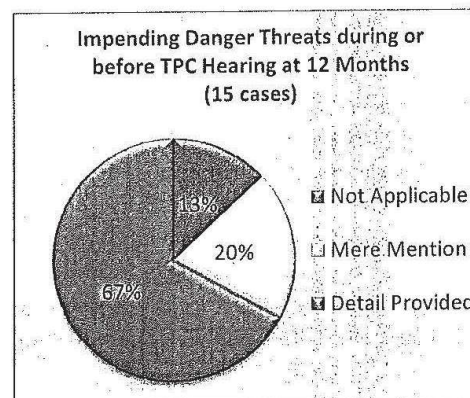
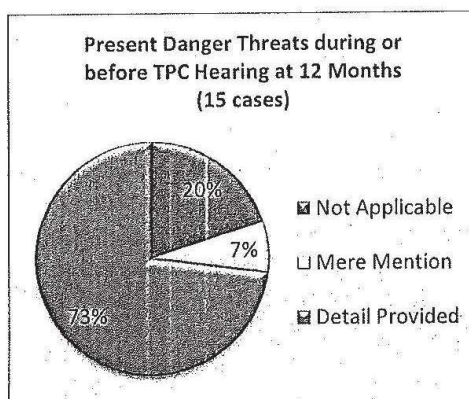
CCIP pulled a total of 29 CHIPS cases for children with CHIPS petitions filed between 9/1/16 and 2/28/17. These cases were broken down further as follows:

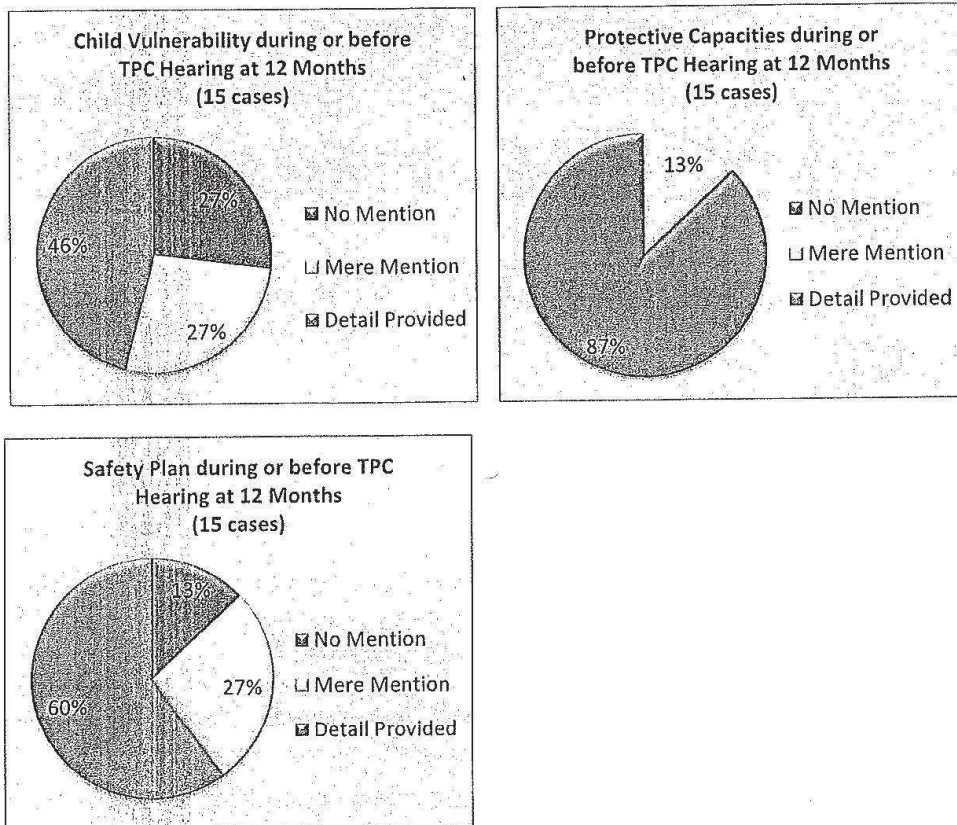
- 29 total cases pulled randomly
- 2 privately filed CHIPS matters
- 12 cases that did not have a TPC hearing
- = 15 cases that met criteria for review**

The table below summarizes the information gathered from those 15 cases. They describe the amount of detail on each of the safety topics located in the qualifying cases. All of the safety topics that the agency is required to gather during the 60-day initial assessment time frame are included in the chart. Data is recorded as one of the following: *No mention of the topic*, *Mere mention of the topic* (a single statement), or *More than mere mention* (more than a statement). If a case included at least one type of danger threat, then the other danger threat was recorded as *Not applicable (N/A)*. The topics marked in bold are the minimum pieces of information necessary for determining if a child is safe or unsafe, and for the court to consider at the TPC hearing under the Child Safety Decision-Making Model.

Extent Topics Addressed Prior to or at TPC Hearing (15 Cases files)	No Mention of Topic	Mere Mention of Topic	More than a Statement	N/A
Nature and extent of maltreatment	0	2	13	0
Circumstances of maltreatment	0	2	13	0
Child's daily functioning	6	3	6	0
Discipline of child(ren)	5	0	5	5
Parenting practices	1	1	10	3
Parents' life management skills	3	1	9	2
Present threats of danger	0	1	11	3
Impending threats of danger	0	3	10	2
Child vulnerability	4	4	7	0
Parental protective capacities	0	2	13	0
Safety Plan (discussed or considered)	2	4	9	0

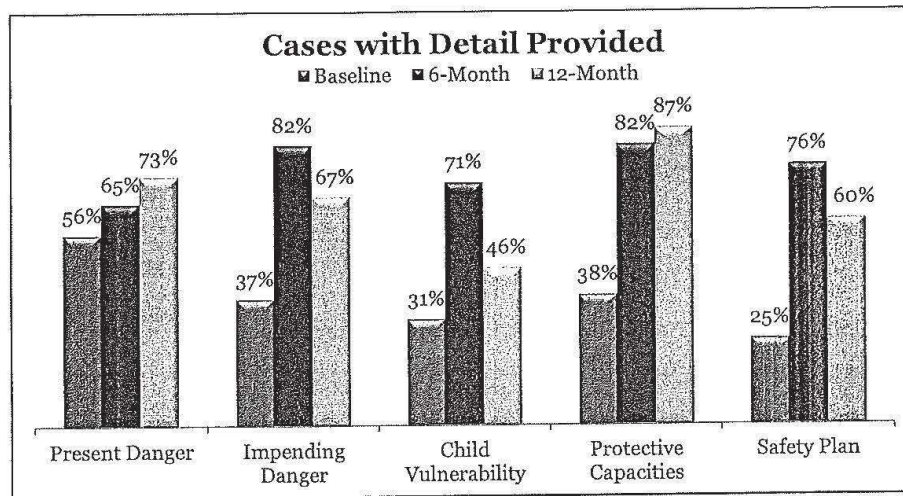
The following pie charts show the levels of discussion identified in the written documentation located in the court files on the required safety topics.





The data from Waukesha County shows that the topics of protective capacities and both types of danger threats were covered in every reviewed file. While child vulnerability demonstrates the largest percentage of missing information (27%), there is also the presence of the needed information present within 73% of the files reviewed (mere mention and detail provided combined). Given the limited sample size, it is important to keep in mind that this data may not necessarily be representative of typical practice in Waukesha County.

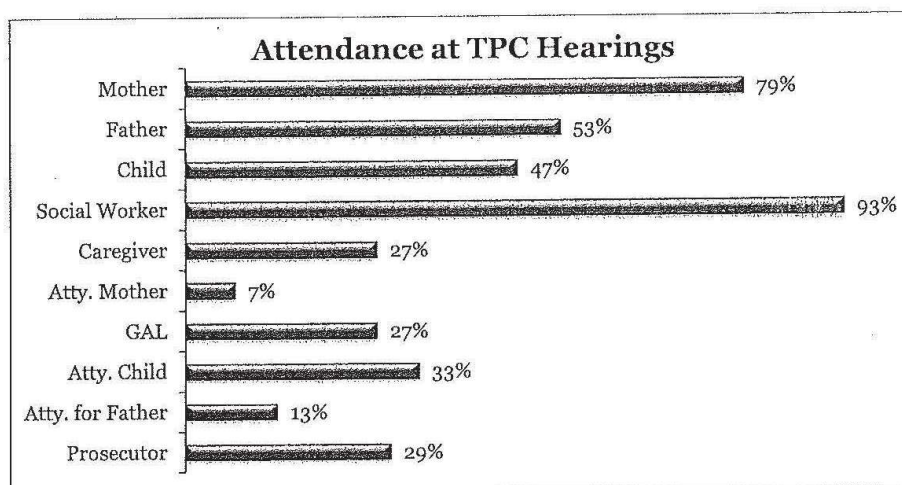
The next chart illustrates the change in the percentage of cases with detail provided (i.e., more than mere mention) of a topic at three different points in the project. The red bar indicates the baseline percentage. The blue bar shows the percentage at the 6-month point, and the green bar represents the percentage at the end of the 12-month measurement period.



Court Observation

CCIP was unable to observe any TPC hearings in Waukesha County during the final phase of the project. Consequently, CCIP used surveys and focus groups as an alternate source of information about court practices. While CCIP did not collect any data firsthand in the final phase of the project through direct observation of hearings, the information obtained from the survey and focus group participants can be compared between the different stakeholder groups and against the court file review data to identify any possible trends.

The chart below shows participant attendance at TPC hearings for the cases in the court file review. While not reflected in the chart, a court commissioner presided at all of these hearings.



Focus Groups

CCIP obtained information from the participants in the project to gain a better perspective of their reactions to the Model. Waukesha County participants were asked questions regarding their understanding of the child safety decision-making process, their confidence in safety decisions, and usefulness of the Benchcards and new circuit court forms. Participants were also asked to provide information on changes in practice at hearings.

CCIP conducted focus groups with judicial officers and human services staff in February and March of 2017. A few themes emerged from the information gathered:

1. **All groups agreed that there was increased discussion on the safety topics in TPC hearings and progress on the goals.** There was agreement regarding increased discussion on safety topics at the TPC hearings during the Implementation Phase of the Model. While there was consensus that progress had been made, there was some disagreement as to the amount. Some lack of progress may be attributed to staff changes. Participation in the Model increased the confidence of some participants in their decision-making, but did not have a reported effect for others. The efforts of some of the legal professionals to try to be more aware of the safety process were also acknowledged.
2. **There was agreement that the Model and form JC-1609 would likely continue to be used for TPC hearings.** Focus group participants all agreed that they would likely continue use of the Model and the circuit court forms. The focus groups described different ways that the Safety Model became a helpful way to address practice outside of TPC hearings, such as subsequent hearings and even hearings on other matters.
3. **There was consistent use of the new circuit court forms, and their introduction into the county helped participants enhance their practice.** It was reported that safety issues were framed more clearly in hearings. Participants indicated that JC-1609 helps break down the information for parents. An example of enhanced practice was the example where a parent said that they felt heard and included in the TPC hearing. The forms seemed to become what was described as a roadmap for leading discussions on safety. Given the focus of safety throughout Chapter 48 and Chapter 938, the form served as a way of guiding discussions with parents. Furthermore, participants did acknowledge that participation in the Model has had moderately positive impacts on the relationships between participants in general.
4. **Some legal professionals demonstrated consistent and increased use of the safety topics in hearings, but there was inconsistency by other participants.** It was reported that judicial officials, the county attorney and some of the other attorneys consistently increased their discussions of safety topics. There was also agreement regarding a lack of use by other legal professionals. More consistent use was reported at

the beginning for some participants, but then dwindled as time went on. Use of the Model was completely absent by others. It was reported that some participants are using the terms without connecting their meaning to the actual circumstances.

Attorney Survey

The survey to attorneys was emailed to all attorneys who attended one of the Child Safety trainings conducted in February of 2016 in Waukesha County. Forty-nine surveys were emailed to participants, with eight responses received back.

Participants were asked questions similar in nature to those asked in focus groups, including progress on the goals, changes in practice and responses to the project itself. Six of the eight participants observed moderate or significant progress on the goal of "better understanding of child safety decision-making process". Only two of the eight participants noted increased confidence in safety decision-making: one of those participants believed the progress to be significant and the other participant found the progress to be moderate. Six of the eight participants noted that there was increased discussion on safety topics in subsequent hearings. This information is consistent with the information provided by the focus groups.

The attorneys were asked to provide information related to changes in practice. Five of the eight reported that they increased discussions of safety with their clients. They also reported changes as to how TPC hearings are discussed. Six of the eight participants reported an increase in their understanding of child safety: one participant experienced a significant increase and the remaining five reported a moderate increase.

Half of the participants who responded to the survey reported that they found the Benchcards to be moderately helpful and the revised court forms, JC-1608 and JC-1609, to be very helpful. Of all of the groups that reported on the Benchcards, it appears that the attorneys found the forms to be of the most value. Five attorneys indicated that the project met their expectations and six indicated that they were likely to continue use of the Model.

The participants also provided feedback on the Model itself. The respondents indicated that they would like to see changes to the training (n=5), increased opportunities for discussions with stakeholders (n=2), and more contact with CCIP staff (n=3). The majority of participants that responded to the survey found the project to be a positive experience.

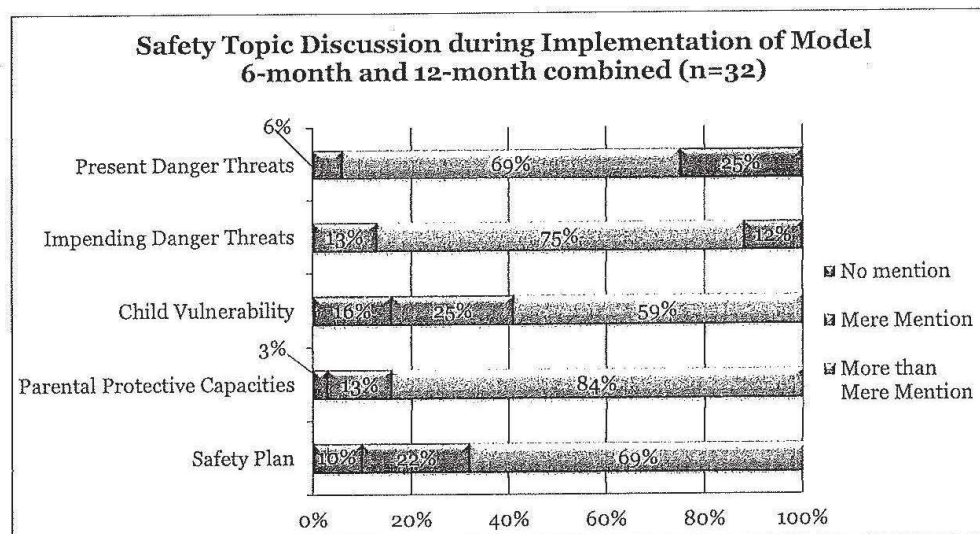
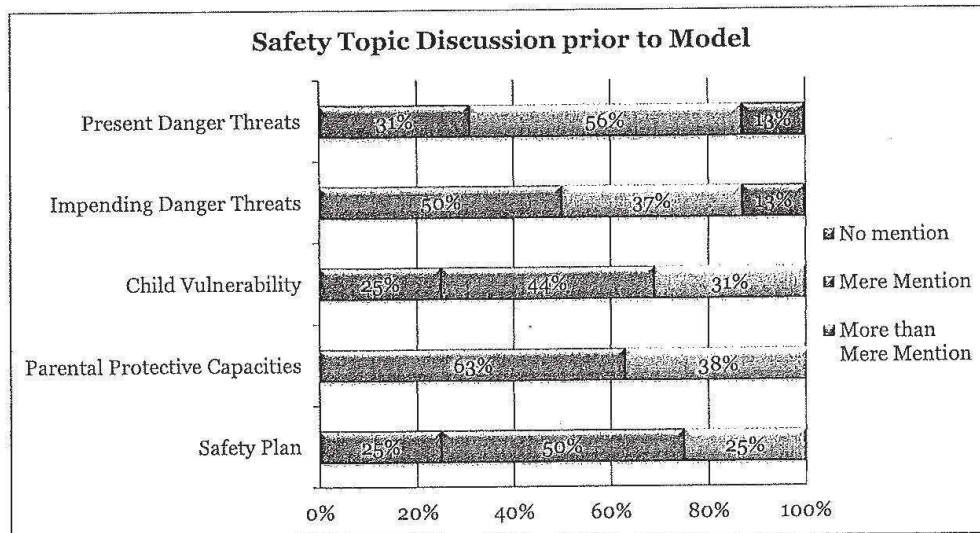
Findings and Observations

Overall Strengths

Waukesha County demonstrated many positive characteristics that contributed to a successful implementation of the project. There were many additional strengths identified that were not necessarily being measured as part of the project.

1. Waukesha County demonstrated an overall increase in detailed information on the required safety topics contained within the court files. In particular, there was a significant increase for the topics of child vulnerability and safety plans from the baseline to the end of the Implementation Phase.
2. Participants reported a significant increase in the level of discussion occurring at hearings related to the safety topics.
3. There was strong judicial leadership that appeared to contribute to consistent participation in the Model. Both the judicial officials, who participated in the project, as well as the Chief Judge, expressed ongoing commitment to improvements in practice.
4. Human services managers for the children's unit, as well as the human services director and deputy director, all provided positive support of the project from its introduction. This also helped set an expectation of participation in the Model.
5. There was a high percentage of fidelity to the mandatory use of the TPC Request (JC-1608) and the TPC Request Supplement (JC-1609) during the implementation phase. At the 12-month mark of participation, JC-1609 was still being filed in 81% of the reviewed TPC hearings.
6. Overall, Waukesha County was able to maintain increased discussions on the safety topics as required in the Model. It appears likely that Waukesha County will continue to use of the Model and forms.

As a way of providing visual demonstration of some of the strengths, the two charts that follow illustrate the changes in practice for Waukesha County. The hoped for result is to observe the areas with no mention (red) to become smaller and the other areas for the presence of the topic (preferably the green area) to increase in amount.



Overall Areas that may Need Attention

1. Additional Training and Support Needed

Participants indicated that attorneys would benefit from additional training. Social workers have already received extensive training on child safety, much more than the training provided for this project. Both social workers and judicial officers had more opportunities to apply the

Model to TPC hearings than attorneys did. While some felt that CCIP was available enough during implementation of the Model, others indicated more of a presence by CCIP staff would have been helpful.

2. Documentation of Child Vulnerability for Older and/or Dual Status Children

There may be some confusion regarding the need to document child vulnerability for older children or those who are involved in both Chapter 48 and Chapter 938 cases. Three cases in the last data review were missing information on child vulnerability. One of those cases lacked both JC-1608 and JC-1609. All three children missing child vulnerability information were age 14 or over. The lack of vulnerability information from those files caused the data from the 12-month collection to be lower than the 6-month data. At least one of the children can be considered “dual status” as there was both a Chapter 48 and a Chapter 938 case pending. Files with dual status children consistently contained less safety information compared to the other files. While safety in Chapter 938 is not focused on to the extent it is in Chapter 48, each case type should have findings specific to the statutory requirements. Often, case files lacked clarity regarding the status of the CHIPS file. It was unclear if the child was being taken into custody under both types cases, or if the CHIPS order was merely amended to reflect consistency with the other order. Additional confusion in these cases was apparent in the types of information used for the findings required for out-of-home care. For example, one case file for an older child contained the child’s refusal to follow rules as the basis as to why it was contrary to the welfare of the child to remain in the home without further explanation. While it is possible that the child’s behaviors may have led to a finding that the child was unsafe, the information needed to connect the behavior to a safety determination was absent from the written documentation.

One possible solution may be to have workers ask peers or supervisors to look at their TPC documentation prior to providing it to the court. There was also a request for additional examples of JC-1609 to be created for participants. Examples that include older and dual status children should help provide guidance. The orders reflect lower numbers based only on a case file review, and do not reflect a completed initial assessment. It is hoped the information may be used to improve the information provided to the court as a best practice measure, and not used to reflect actual performance.

3. More Opportunities for Interactions between Parties

Waukesha County may benefit from opportunities for participants to be able to interact more often and in settings outside of adversarial hearings. The current county practice does not include the regular attendance of a GAL or Corporation Counsel at TPC hearings. A desire to have Corporation Counsel present at TPC hearings on a more consistent basis was communicated to CCIP. While some parties are utilizing the safety information to some extent, there is not consistent implementation. Changes to the trainings may help address this issue.

The number of attendees at the Waukesha trainings was not conducive to meaningful interaction and discussion.

Other Observations and Trends

1. Expanded Use of the Model

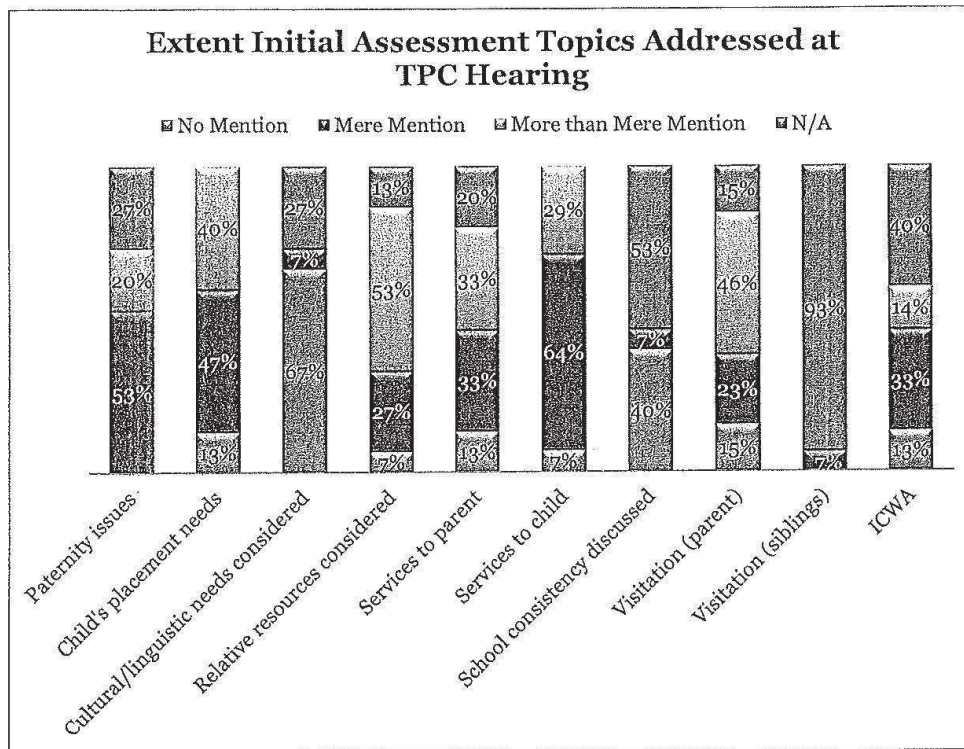
The Model was found to be useful in other types of cases, such as JIPS cases, family court matters, as well as at subsequent hearings such as Permanency Reviews. It was noted that attention should be given to make conditions of return more tailored and more concrete. It was reported that there are conditions of return that are not always action-oriented and difficult to measure. For example, "Appreciate the need to have a plan in times of crisis". Ideally, conditions should reflect performance that can identify and measure a demonstration of desired parenting skills, based upon the needs of the family.

It was suggested that CCIP examine the Statement of Guardian ad Litem (JC-1799) to see if the form reflects the statutory requirements as well as the use of safety information. Judicial officials and social workers rarely utilized the Benchcards. Most relied upon the new circuit court forms or upon the state standards. Considerations will need to be made to determine if a shorter document might be utilized more by participants.

2. Other Discussion Topics

While the reviews did not reveal any actual cases that involved a child subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), this topic was rarely discussed on the record. Given the recent changes to the federal guidelines and regulations regarding ICWA, it should be inquired about at the TPC hearings, and at any subsequent hearings. Inquiries into other topics should be included in TPC hearings, namely cultural considerations and consistency in the child's school. Recent changes in federal law require efforts are made to make sure that children remain in their school of origin unless continued placement is no longer in their best interests. While much of this information is not necessary for a TPC hearing under those statutes, cultural and linguistic considerations do represent important factors for a child. Ensuring that the system considers the well-being of the child is an important consideration in the wake of a removal. Cultural considerations for placement are not only trauma-informed, but best practice.

To illustrate this observation, please see the bar graph below. This graph represents a majority of the topics that would be addressed in an initial assessment. Ideally, this information would also be available for a TPC hearing. The sections of the chart coded in red represent the percentage of cases with no mention of that particular subject, while green areas represent the areas with the most discussion.



Conclusion

Overall, Waukesha County showed significant progress on the goals of the Model. Leadership from many participants helped greatly in continued participation in the Model. Even participants who did not observe consistent changes in practice noted significant changes and efforts by a number of other participants. There were very noticeable increases in the amounts of safety topics presented in hearings. Participants provided CCIP with feedback that helped shape future discussions on the Model, and will have an impact on the possibility of further discussions within their own county. The TPC forms provided both the judicial officers and social workers with a consistent framework for safety discussions for TPC hearings and in other circumstances. Focus groups and survey participants indicated positive results from the model.

Next Steps

1. Participants are encouraged to continue to ask for guidance from CCIP, and may consider additional training for those participants who were unable to attend the original training, or have not had the opportunity to gain familiarity of the Model through actual case practice. CCIP will provide workers with additional examples of JC-1608 and JC-

1609 to assist in the learning process. CCIP is also willing to meet with any incoming judicial officers to discuss the circuit court forms, the Model, or training opportunities.

2. Waukesha County is encouraged to inquire about ICWA at every TPC hearing, and at all subsequent hearings. Waukesha County is encouraged to make inquiries into the cultural considerations of families.
3. Waukesha County may want to ensure that the child's school of origin is taken into account when arranging placement in out-of-home care.
4. Waukesha County is encouraged to continue use of the Child Safety Model at TPC hearings, as well as to continue expanding the use of the Model to other hearings (e.g., Dispositional Hearings and Permanency Hearings).
5. CCIP will work with Waukesha County to arrange a Summary Presentation on the Model. CCIP will remain available to provide some of the other technical assistance as requested by the participants, including the TPC form changes and additional examples of the use of form JC-1609.

Waukesha County Demographics and Data

Data Sources:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/reports/CAN/2014/2014CANReport.pdf>

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/reports/CAN/2013/2013CANReport.pdf>

Child Safety Decision-Making Model
Children's Court Improvement Program
4/8/2016

Waukesha County Initial Findings

The following information comes from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Reports. It includes county-specific data on child protective services (CPS) referrals and county demographics.

Total CPS Referrals and Screening Decisions

Year	Total CPS Referrals	Screen-out CPS Referrals	Screen-out Percent	Screen-in CPS Referrals	Screen-in Percent	Screen-in Service Referrals*	Screen-out Service Referrals*
2013	1,696	1,183	69.8%	513	30.2%	395	125
2014	1,776	1,256	70.7%	520	29.3%	330	101

*Service referrals represent contacts and decisions where CPS issues were not identified as part of the report. Decisions about documentation of service referrals are not governed by statute and are determined by local agency practice.

CPS Reports & Child Victims

Year	County Child Population (Ages 0-17)	Total CPS Reports	CPS Reports per 1,000 Population	Number of Child Victims	Child Victims per 1,000 Population
2013	89,433	730	8.2	145	1.6
2014	88,374	677	7.7	142	1.6

The 'Number of Child Victims' column above represents the counts of children victimized in a specific county. This figure is larger than the 4,961 unique maltreated children listed in the report as children may be victimized in more than one county.

County Maltreatment Substantiation Rate

Year	Number of CPS Initial Assessments	Total CPS Reports	Traditional Response Maltreatment Allegations	Maltreatment Substantiation Count	Maltreatment Substantiation Rate
2013	504	730	803	154	19.2%
2014	504	677	723	152	21%

Waukesha County Initial Findings

County Maltreatment Allegation Substantiation Rate by Maltreatment Type

Year	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse	Total County Substantiation
2013	14.7%	11.2%	37.1%	0.0%	19.2%
2014	19.3%	9.2%	31.9%	0.0%	21.0%

Total Safety Assessments and Total CPS Reports

Year	Primary Caregiver CPS Initial Assessments	Number of 'Safe' Safety Decisions	Number of 'Unsafe' Safety Decisions	Percent of Safety Decisions found to be 'Unsafe'
2013	396	361	33	8.3%
2014	399	361	35	8.3%